



[REDACTED]

13 April 2026

Dear [REDACTED]

Freedom of Information request: FOI2026/00106

Thank you for your Freedom of Information request received on the 11 February in which you requested the following:

Your request:

I would like to respectfully request copies of the documents for all the audits conducted by the UKRI at the University of Leeds, during the period January 2020 - present, with regard to how the University of Leeds has ensured compliance with UKRI documents and requirements, including but not limited to the UKRI training grant terms and conditions. (But also other relevant documents such as, for example, the UKRI Statement of Expectations for PhD projects.)

If there are project-specific audits, please let me know and please provide the audits for the research project that has project reference - 2598155.

(<https://gtr.ukri.org/projects?ref=studentship-2598155>)

If there aren't any such project-specific audits, then please confirm that there aren't such documents. And, in this case, please provide any other documents for audits conducted by the UKRI with regard to how the University of Leeds is ensuring compliance with the UKRI training grant terms and conditions (for research programmes that are funded by using UKRI research grants.)

If there are documents for both project-specific audits (for the project mentioned above) and for the University of Leeds's UKRI compliance in general, please provide both.

If there are documents for audits that pertain specifically to how the School of Electronic and Electrical Engineering of the University of Leeds has complied with UKRI documentation, terms and conditions, during the period mentioned above please kindly provide these as well.

Please provide the documents mentioned in this email both for audits conducted by the UKRI (by, for example, visiting or inspecting the University of Leeds) as well as documents for audits conducted by the University of Leeds (self-audit).

If any of the documents I requested do not exist (e.g., if there have been no audits), please state this clearly for each of the documents (or, as the case may be, category of documents) mentioned above.

If any of the documents requested do exist but cannot be disclosed to me, then please state this clearly for each of the documents requested above, stating the reason why they can't be disclosed. Please also let me know the contact information (email address, postal address, person of contact etc) of the UKRI's legal affairs team. (This is because, in such a case, I may have to use another route / procedure in order to obtain the same documents.)

Our response

I can confirm that UK Research and Innovation (UKRI) does hold information relevant to your request.

UKRI holds three Funding Assurance Reports relating to the University of Leeds that fall within the scope of your request. UKRI does not hold any audits for the University of Leeds, any project specific audits, including for project reference 2598155, or any audits pertaining to the School of Electronic and Electrical Engineering.

The Funding Assurance Reports held by UKRI do not constitute full audits. The assurance processes undertaken are not designed to provide comprehensive assurance across all activities delivered by the University of Leeds. The scope of these reports does not include project reference 2598155, nor do they assess compliance with UKRI's training grant terms and conditions or with UKRI's Statement of Expectations for Doctoral Training.

A selection of grants delivered by the School of Electronic and Electrical Engineering were included in the Funding Assurance Reports. Although some errors were identified on these grants, these concerned generic issues identified across the University, not specific issues related to the school itself.

Section 43(3) – Commercial Interests

After careful consideration, we are withholding the information under Section 43(2) of the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FOIA). This exemption is used where disclosure would likely result in a person's (an individual, a company the public authority itself or any other legal entities) commercial interests being prejudiced.

This is a qualified exemption, and a test was carried out to determine whether the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighs public interest in disclosure.

Public interest in favour of disclosure

- There is public interest in openness and transparency about how public authorities, such as UKRI, operate.
- Information held may improve public understanding of UKRI's commercial activities.
- Transparency can increase public confidence that commercial arrangements are conducted properly and in the public interest.
- There is public interest in the disclosure of this information to ensure transparency and openness of a public organisation.
- There is also a public interest in transparency to ensure the accountability of public organisations and how they spend public funding.

Public interest in favour of withholding the information

- The Funding Assurance Reports contain commercially sensitive information such as costs and expenditure which are disclosed to UKRI in confidence. We have an agreement with the University of Leeds that prevents us from releasing any confidential information without their permission. Releasing the information requested could be taken advantage of by competitors in planning competing strategies for further business opportunities.
- Releasing information provided in confidence to UKRI is likely to damage the possibility of ongoing relationships with other organisations. Relationships may become untenable if third parties cannot be certain that their commercial information will remain confidential when held by UKRI.
- Breaching the commercial interest may also adversely affect future negotiation opportunities for UKRI. UKRI may be seen as a 'confidentiality' risk if it routinely releases information relating to business arrangements into the public domain, particularly where this is third party information.
- We follow the government guidance on managing public money.¹ Standards expected of all public services include integrity, reliability, spending money in the public interest and achieving value for money. Our current thorough process ensures that only the best projects receive public monies. Releasing this

¹https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/742188/Managing_Public_Money_MPM_2018.pdf

information could jeopardize the fair and transparent competition process and undermine our function to fund the best projects. In turn, undermining this process would go against our responsibilities to manage our use of public funds.

- We also considered the impact on UKRI if commercially sensitive information of companies we engage and work closely with were disclosed. We believe it would damage the trust in UKRI and likely impact our ability to carry out our role and manage our current and future investments.

Taking the above arguments into consideration, we reached the decision that the need for commercial confidentiality outweighs the public interest in releasing this information and that the public interest favours maintaining the exemption under section 43; therefore, the information is exempt from disclosure.

To advise and assist you, please note that UKRI and EPSRC do not carry out their own institutional audits of this nature and do not undertake audits or checks at the level of individual doctoral projects, departments, or similar. Further, UKRI does not conduct audits of individual projects at this level of detail.

EPSRC undertakes an assurance process through which information is requested from universities prior to the issuance of Doctoral Training Partnership or Doctoral Landscape awards. This assurance activity would have been completed in advance of awarding grant EP/T517860/1, which funded project reference 2598155, and would have been repeated for the subsequent successor grants awarded to the University of Leeds in 2022 and 2024.

I am unable to share contact details for the UKRI Legal team as we do not share this information publicly. However, you may wish to review the UKRI webpages on how to [make a complaint](#)² and our [whistleblowing policies](#).³

Your rights

If you have any queries regarding our response please do let us know. If you are dissatisfied with the handling of your request, you have the right to ask for an internal review, explaining which elements of this decision you disagree with and why. Internal review requests should be submitted within 40 working days of the date of our response and should be addressed to:

Head of Information Governance


Email: foi@ukri.org

Please quote the reference number above in any future communications.

If you are still not content with the outcome of the internal review, you may apply to refer the matter to the Information Commissioner for a decision. Generally, the ICO cannot make a decision unless you have exhausted the review procedure provided by UKRI. The Information Commissioner can be contacted at: www.ico.org.uk

If you wish to raise a complaint regarding the service you have received or the conduct of any UKRI staff in relation to your request, please see [UKRI's complaints procedure](#).⁴

Yours sincerely,


Information Governance
Information Rights Team
UK Research and Innovation
foi@ukri.org | dataprotection@ukri.org

² [Make a complaint – UKRI](#)

³ [Whistleblowing policy – UKRI](#)

⁴ <https://www.ukri.org/who-we-are/contact-us/make-a-complaint/#skipnav-target>